

STOCKBRIDGE WATER TOWER  
South of and adjacent to the Village Hall,  
located at 115 East Elizabeth Street,  
100 feet east of the corner of M-106/M-52,  
Stockbridge  
Ingham County  
Michigan

HAER No. MI-86

HAER  
MICH  
33-STOBR  
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD  
National Park Service  
Northeast Region  
Philadelphia Support Office  
U.S. Custom House  
200 Chestnut Street  
Philadelphia, P.A. 19106

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STOCKBRIDGE WATER TOWER

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Location: South of and adjacent to the Village Hall located at 115 East Elizabeth Street, 100 feet east of the corner of M-106/M-52 Stockbridge, Ingham County, Michigan

UTM: 16.731942.4703367  
Quad: Stockbridge, Michigan, 1:24,000

Date of Construction: 1912

Engineer: Chicago Bridge and Iron Works  
Architect: Not known

Present Owner: Village of Stockbridge

Present Use: Provides water for village

Significance: Stockbridge's 1912 vintage water tower is an early example of an elliptical bottom tank patented in 1907 by the Chicago Bridge & Iron Works, probably the leading producer of such structures in the nation. Early twentieth-century water tower structures having such elliptical-bottom tanks appear to be less common than hemispherical bottomed tanks.

Project Information: As part of the development of an industrial park and due to the age, size, and deteriorated condition, an engineering evaluation (1992) recommended replacement and demolition of the 1912 vintage structure with a larger water tower. To mitigate the adverse effect, the State Historic Preservation Office stipulated photo and written documentation as prescribed by the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER). This documentation was undertaken to fulfill this stipulation.

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STOCKBRIDGE WATER TOWER  
HAER No. MI-86 (Page 2)

Summary Description of Water Tower and Setting

This water tower is located in the village's downtown business district directly adjacent to the Village Hall and several residences and businesses. Built in 1912 by the Chicago Bridge and Iron Works, the tower is 118 feet high to the overflow and holds 75,000 gallons of water.

With a population of 663 in 1910, the village began considering a municipal water system. The local news column in the April 11, 1912 *Stockbridge Brief-Sun* noted that "[t]he waterworks question is again being agitated in this village. The village needs it, and it is only a question of a little push and enterprise."

Subsequently, a notice appeared on the front page of the paper on May 9, 1912 stating the following:

"All persons interested in water-works for Stockbridge are requested to meet in the council room Friday evening, May 10, at 8 o'clock. This meeting is called to consider the advisability of calling a special election to vote on the water-works question."

This meeting resulted in the following:

"At the meeting held last Friday evening to consider the water-works proposition, after being talked over, it was decided to call a special election for Monday May 27, to submit the question to the tax-paying voters in this village.

"This is something we have long needed and it seems as if the vote should be unanimous for this proposition."

"Of course the putting in water works means more taxes, but the rate will be so small that it will be hardly noticeable, and those who have looked into the matter inform us that it will lessen the insurance rate, therefore in the long run will cost us no more than we pay now.

"The election will determine whether we bond the village for \$20,000 or not."

The May 30, 1912 paper indicates that the process was underway, but the election would be held June 3.

"The proposition to bond the village for the installation of a waterworks is to be submitted to the people on Monday next as shown in the notices elsewhere.

STOCKBRIDGE WATER TOWER  
HAER No. MI-86 (Page 3)

"In order that the citizens may familiarize themselves with the plan the Council has secured the services of Mr. Geo. H. Fenkell, civil engineer to the Board of Water Commissioners of Detroit on Thursday evening in the town hall, to explain various systems, their installation and probable cost."

A front page editorial entitled "Water is Life" also accompanied the above information.

"On Monday, June 3, the citizens of this village will be called upon to pass or reject the proposition carried in a meeting of the council for the installation of a waterworks system, and as the town has thus far secured their supply as individuals requirements demanded it, the time is at hand to be abreast of progress made and maintained in our sister communities.

"Water being as necessary to life as the air we breathe, it becomes our duty to secure a supply as pure as possible, and in quantities as may be demanded for all purposes.

"At the present time we are practically without fire protection, and should a fire start and not be discovered in time, our beautiful village would be wiped off the map.

"If our or your home should be destroyed by fire, the insurance might help to restore it, but there are keep sakes and valuables that could never be replaced.

"As has been proven, a little water is worse than none at all in case of fire, therefore it is absolutely essential that we grasp the opportunity at once and enjoy our lives as our city cousins, with the modern water-works in our village.

"We are informed that the council has secured an expert engineer to visit our village and give us valuable information, therefore it is our duty to become familiar with the plan in order that we may vote intelligently when the time comes.

"Put an x in the square before the word "yes" next Monday."

A notice was published on the back page of this edition, setting the special election to decide "[s]hall the Village of Stockbridge, Michigan, borrow a sum not exceeding Twenty Thousand Dollars (\$20,000), for the purchase, construction and maintenance of water works in said Village, and issue Municipal Bonds of said Village or evidences of indebtedness therefor."

STOCKBRIDGE WATER TOWER  
HAER No. MI-86 (Page 4)

The June 6, 1912 edition reported that the bond issue passed.

"There were 199 votes polled as follows: Yes, 140; No, 54 and 5 thrown out, favoring bonding by 11 majority over the required two-thirds.

"There were 42 women registered last Saturday and of this number 40 voted Monday.

"Water works is one thing the village has long needed, and the large majority voting favorably on the proposition naturally feel elated over the victory at this their first trial, in securing the system.

"Those who have inquired into the matter inform us that the amount is plenty high enough to install a first-class system and one we will all be proud of.

"Let good men now be placed on the various committees and take time enough in selecting the right kind of equipment at the lowest cost for the best system.

"It is well for us to suggest that the work of installing the plant, laying the pipe, etc. be given as much as possible to our home citizens."

At the July 1, 1912 Village Council meeting a motion was made and approved to have the "president appoint a committee of two to visit several water plants and see how large their wells are and gather information in regard to their construction and management. A.A. Hall and [village president] Dr. Brogan appointed."

The following excerpt from Stockbridge: A Corner of Ingham is the only record of the water tower's actual arrival in Stockbridge:

"In 1912 the village issued bonds for \$25,000 to build a waterworks. Three deep wells were drilled and a large water tank installed high enough to insure adequate pressure to all parts of the village. The water was found to contain sulphur and other minerals which gave it an unpleasant taste, but the State Department of Health certified it as safe for domestic use. A new well, drilled in 1953 at some distance from the original wells, is said to provide better water. [Glenn] Gardner [who was granted a franchise in 1910 to build and operate an electric light plant in the village] was given a contract to operate the waterworks along with his electric light plant. He later sold out to Mr. Kranzfelder, who soon disposed of his interest to the Consumers Power Company. The pumping is now largely

STOCKBRIDGE WATER TOWER  
HAER No. MI-86 (Page 5)

automatic by electric power, with a standby gas engine to use in case of emergency."

The waterworks along with the power plant and railroad were integral to making Stockbridge a hub of commerce and industry at the turn of the century. The village was home to a newspaper (*The Stockbridge Brief-Sun*), a brick and tile factory, a broom factory, an apple evaporator, as well as several flour and saw mills. And between 1909 and 1915, automobile agencies selling Ford, Studebaker, Dodge, and Buick cars made their appearance.

The railroad has since been abandoned and power is supplied by large generating facilities located outside the area, but the continued growth of the village, the location of new industries, and the village's development of an industrial park has led to the need for a newer and larger water tower. Today, the village is home to a newspaper (*The Town Crier*), a screw machine manufacturer, a metal stamping plant, a stainless steel equipment manufacturer, an onion processing plant, a munitions manufacturer, and a Ford auto dealership. In this context, it is appropriate that the Chicago Bridge and Iron Works was selected to build the new 300,000 gallon tower that now graces the village skyline.

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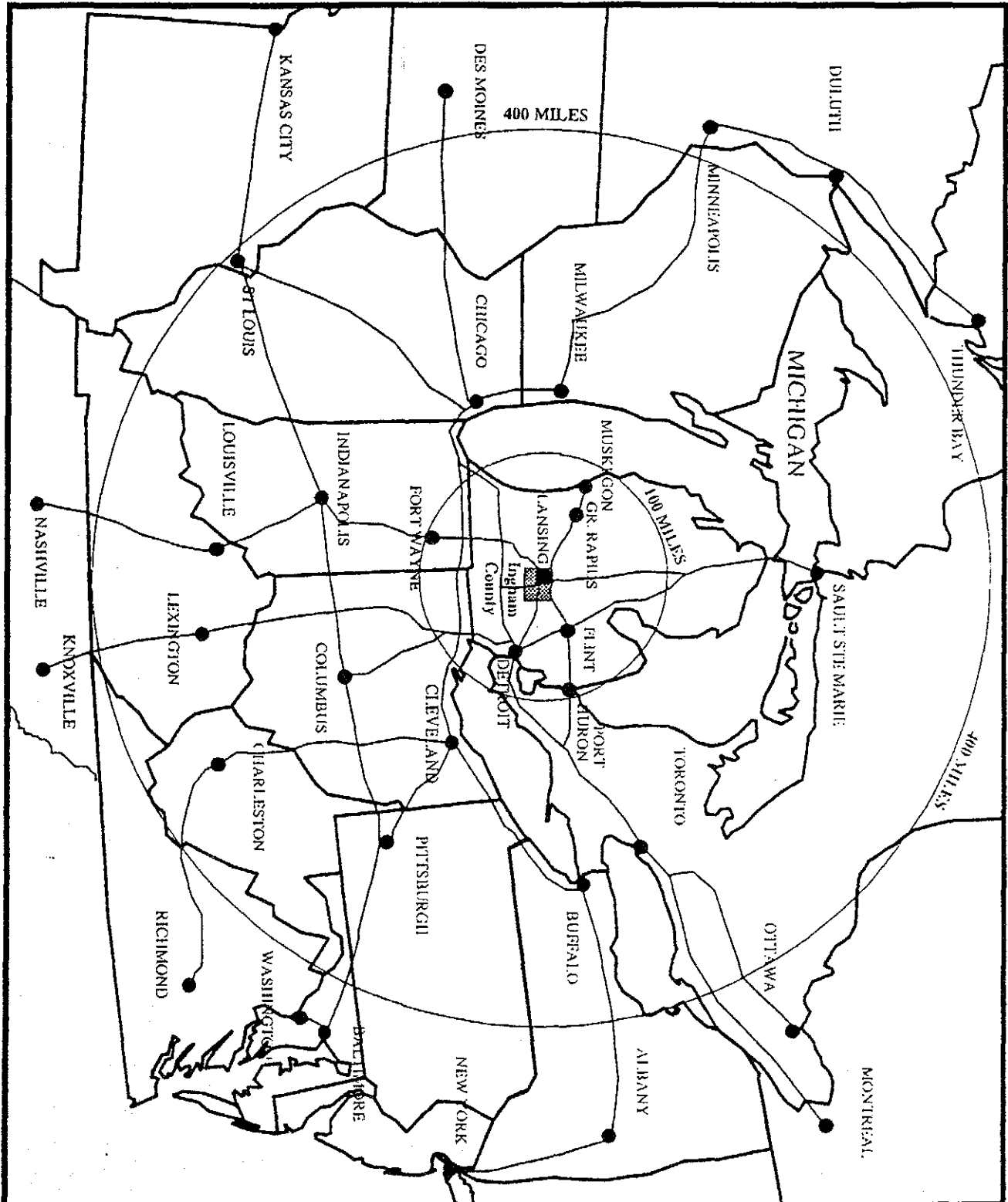
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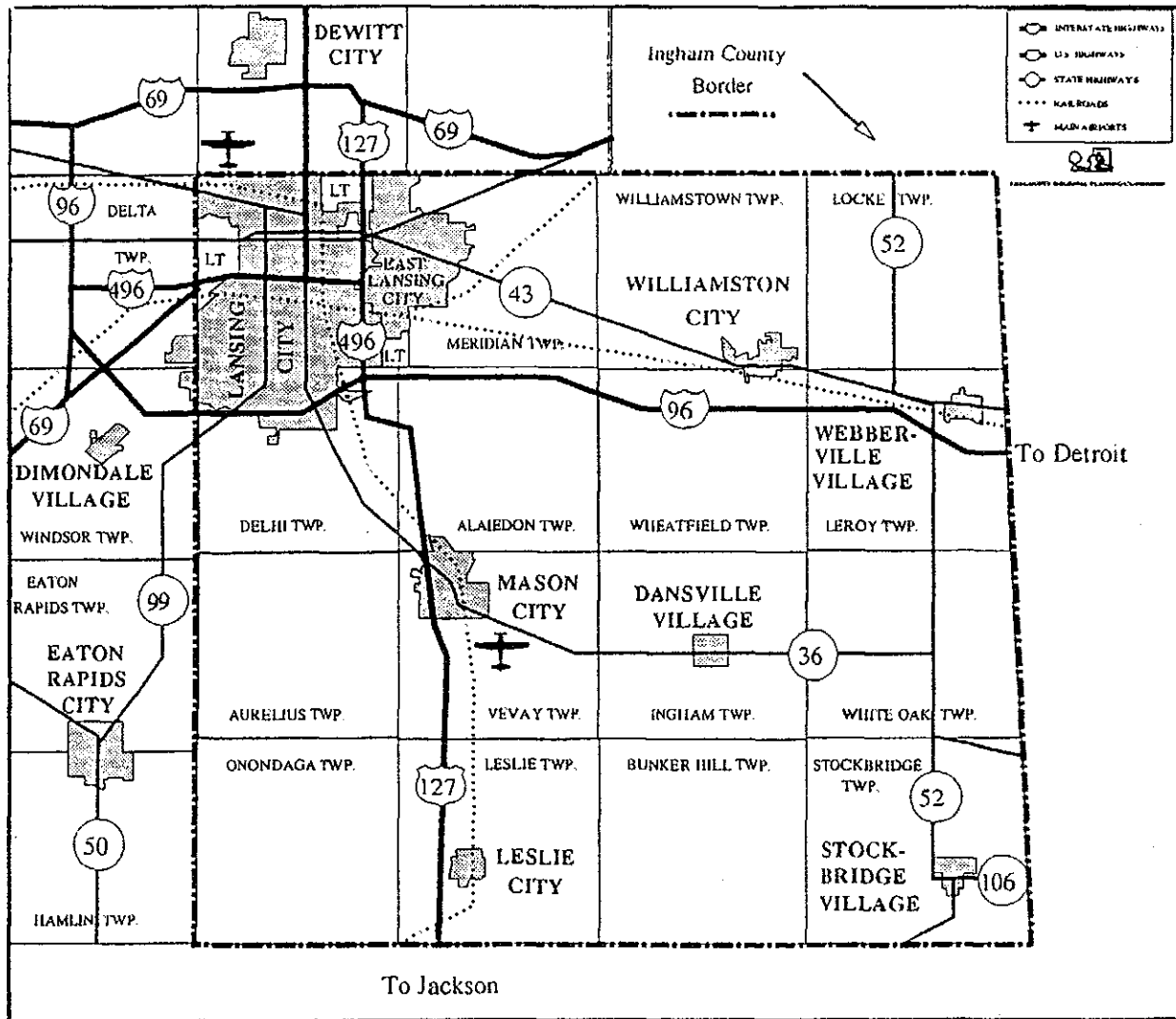
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STOCKBRIDGE WATER TOWER  
HAER No. MI-86 (Page 7)





INGHAM COUNTY & LANSING AREA



## VILLAGE OF STOCKBRIDGE

